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REPORT

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PREFACE

Chiefly, this report is a synethesis of an exploratory two year period of my work. Exploration is the best description since my travel from work proposal to completed works has just been that: from the unknown to discovery. It could be said that what confronts the viewer is a completed work that, whilst stationary in an exhibition, really represents for me the simultaneous expression of joy and disappointment.

Consequently, this report, as far as words can express, is merely a snapshot of my development. In as much as anything, I hope this report reveals not only the processes and conclusion of my works, but also a little about me: an artist concerned with aesthetics, form, and the effect on the viewer.

RATIONALE

Artistic influences are essentially ambiguous in nature since any theoretical input is derived primarily from the artists interest and sense of self. Such theoretical input is merely an affirmation of direction rather than a basis for artistic development.

The most profound influences on my work come from Brancusi, Gaudi and Boccioni. These artists are for me, such an affirmation of direction as described.

In a visual sense, I like to challenge the viewers' curiosity without being overly ambiguous as to what my work represents. I feel my work ought to be a 'conversation' between me and my viewer. The viewer should get to know me and regard the works as intuitive, feminine, attentive, exciting, reactive rather than provocative and above all, a physical description of my personality. The viewer is invited to empathise with my work, not just see it.

First and foremost, I am extremely curious about the sculptural qualities of clay. Here Gaudi excites me with his architectural sculptures which seem to grow out of the material he used, as well as his attention to textures and form, particularly, human form.

Indeed, human form has always been the most profound centrepiece of art work. My work deals with how clay can be the medium for delving into the complexity of human structures: strength, agility and motion.

Clay has a paradoxical structural quality that allows it to imitate most materials, whilst it at the same time no other material can imitate it.

To achieve the characteristics I sought, I manipulated clay more than I had before. Extracting out of it every trait that it would yield. To create a form of strength out of a material that could be dissolved with water proved a feat. And then, to put it under pressure, put me in suspense. I did not often draw from what I knew clay could do for others, but what I wanted it to do for me.

The most influential artist in what I strived to achieve was Constantin Brancusi. The simplicity and eloquence of his forms evoked a silence that fascinated me. So complete in themselves, Brancusi's forms addressed from his personal perspective ".. the quieter functions of the inner life -, contemplation, memory, the affections.... and technical feats...." 1

The result of his work represents a work suspended, captured for a brief moment of time.

Interestingly, in much the same way as Brancusi employed various devices in order to relate nature and sculpture, so was my struggle in relating clay to a specific form I envisaged. Some of the specific devices that Brancusi employed in order to overcome his conundrum was the use of "...pervasive symmetry, a limited number of axes and the rigorous articulation of planes surfaces and edges..." 2

The 'Turtle' series were forms developed from a central mass. My own forms employed similar features. Also, Brancusi's use of contrast areas of texture were valuable in refining my own methods. In much the same way Brancusi describes the function of polished bronze as his master device, so clay is for me. In describing polished bronze, Brancusi said, "... it aerates the solid form, carries the drawing of the surface to an absolute state and allows the accidental to play over the realm of certainty... " 3

The function of a form in space later became a significant issue. I aimed to extend the visual boundary from plinth to air. The forms, therefore, are not always fixed to their base. Some may rest in more than one position and two may be set in motion. Umberto Boccioni conceived sculpture "... as an aggregate of elements which coincide to create a new aesthetic whole..." 4. He discovered two types of

motion: 'moto assoluto' (absolute motion) and 'moto relativo' (relative motion). These represent different aspects of perception of objects in space. My works mainly deal with the first type - absolute motion. Boccioni regarded this motion as " the expressive plastic potential of the object itself, strictly bound to its own organic substance, ie, its porousness, rigidity, colour, temperature, form, breath and heartbeat of the object..." **5**

In addition to my interest in Boccioni's concepts of motion, a further point of reference which was consistent with the spatial qualifies of clay I sought to develop was the work of Anthony Caro.

Discovering Caro's work was particularly pleasing since it reaffirmed the direction my pieces were taking in terms of extending the terrestrial limits of clay. Caro's 'Table' pieces, in particular, were sculptures which expanded into space beyond the edge of the table-like pedestal and developed from there. In observing the peculiarity of his pieces, it was noted that they would "...open or rise, or suspend, or spread, or turn, or bend, or stretch or extend or recede..." **6**

Caro's work reflected a directness and spontaneity which I began to achieve in my working process in the final pieces.

THE WORKS

The following works are in order of construction.

The first six pieces primarily reflect the concern for volume, shape and line. Surface treatment at this stage is uniform and not deeply explored.

The final nine pieces reveal more experimentation. The forms are induced with greater energy through the dynamic interplay of more elements. That is, a greater diversity in shape, line, and form integrated with strong textural contrasts and variations.

Colour in my pieces should not play an overpowering role. The use of glaze was mainly to render shadows in order to increase the dimension of the volumes, and to emphasize textural detail.

Spine - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 15.5 x 134 x 18cm.

Orifice - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 19.5 x 76.5 x 13cm

Curvature I - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 12 x 78 x 15cm

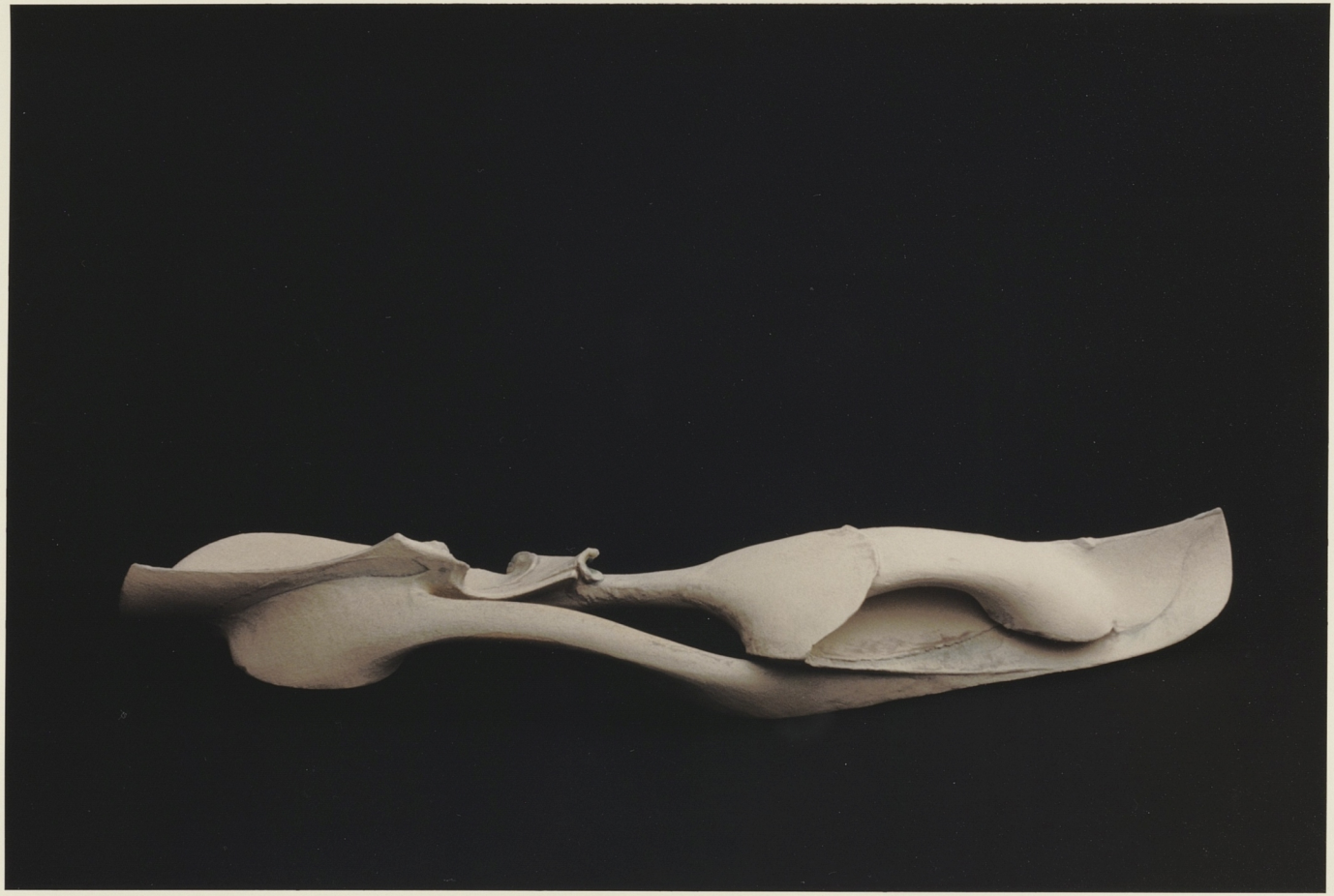
Curvature II - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 37.5 x 95 x 29.5cm

Intersection - Ceramic • Dry glazed - 37.5 x 89.5 x 10.5cm

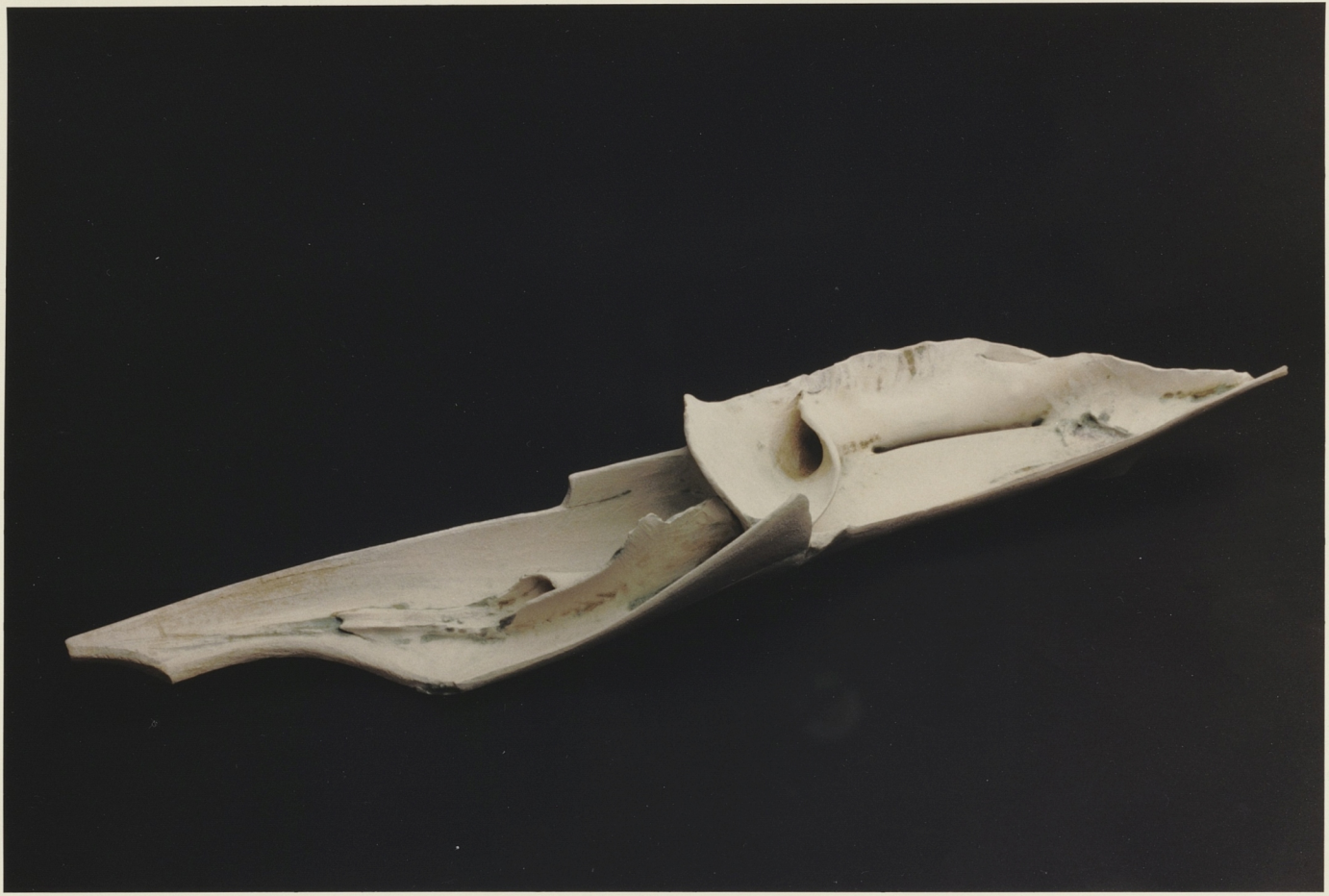
Cavity - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 17 x 89.5 x 10.5cm

Skeletal Study I - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 41.5 x 56.5 x 16cm

Skeletal Study II - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 21.5 x 63.5 x 17cm



Skeletal Study III - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 18 x 85 x 10.5cm



Skeletal Study IV - Ceramic - Dry glazed - 15 x 97 x 13 cm

Skeletal Study V - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 18.5 x 91 x 13.5cm

Skeletal Study VI - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 32.5 x 60.5 x 12cm

Skeletal Study VII - Ceramic-Dry glazed - 25 x 71.5 x 18cm

Skeletal Study VIII - Ceramic . Dry glazed - 60 x 31 x 16cm

Skeletal Study IX - Ceramic. Dry glazed - 81 x 39.5 x 60.5cm

CONCLUSION

My work makes no loud statements. It exists out of my internal needs. Above all, my whole experience with clay can be summed up by a reference from Hans Coper's work "...a naked confrontation with a single material which would show one's every mistake and mark."

Essentially, Brancusi, Boccioni and Caro represented influences consistent with the development of my work. For example, my initial pieces and the interest clay holds for me in terms of simplicity of form was affirmed by Brancusi's philosophy in much the same way as my latter work had references to Caro's extra-spatial conceptions.

In the final analysis, my work can best be described as being in a constant state of evolution. As my curiosity grows and my life experiences develop, first and foremost, I attempt to describe this in my work. Again, biographical references to other artists and their work is primarily a mechanism of affirmation rather than inspiration.

APPENDICES

WORK PROPOSAL

Essentially my work seeks to explore the dichotomy between natural form and structure and the illusion of suspended motion. Within this conceptual framework there will be abstractions and simplifications from the natural environment, which developed within sculptural concepts, seek to achieve a balance of components: chiefly, balances between the negative and positive elements of interior and exterior space.

In a developed sense, my pieces are an exploration of bringing together not only clay, but also metal and glass as working materials. With clay as a focal point and emphasis given to it for its textural and sculptural properties my forms will explore geometric lines using glass and metal as the conductor to achieve such illusions as movement and penetration.

Extending this concept my forms will not only be intersecting vertical planes, which itself is of visual and structural importance, but the clay is, through form, line and shape the visual 'animation' within an inanimate environment, in much the same way, that in an architectural parallel, humans are the animation within an inanimate structure.

My work is an expression of form in its basic element employing the dynamic direction of line and plane as a visual conductor (Brancusi). I will try to develop my works as a relationship between an object and its environment (Boccioni). And further more I hope to achieve a 'fusing' of an animated object with an inanimated environment (Balla).

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

CLAY

Four clay bodies were tested, taking into account expectations of scale, form, texture and colour of the works envisaged.

Walker's White Earthenware (WWE). This clay proved the finest in texture and the most favourable in achieving a very smooth surface by means of burnishing (rubbing a polished stone over the surface). The clay, however, was least malleable in its green state and fared very poorly under tension, where cracks inevitably appeared.

Clayworks GTB. A handbuilding clay, coarser in texture than WWE, yet still prone to cracking under little pressure. This clay was not persisted with.

Feeney's Buff Raku (FBR). An even coarser clay which proved to be the most malleable, plastic and strongest in the green state. It withstood folding without ripping on the crease. It could be pinched out to one millimetre thickness and still hold its form. This gave the advantage of working with large sections at half the thickness of the other clays. It had very little shrinkage. This was most advantageous as a form could be built over a longer period of time and added to or changed and reconstructed.

This clay although quite gritty (large sand content), permitted a variety of textures ranging from smooth to very rough.

Keane's White Raku (KWR). this clay possessed the same robustness as FBR yet at a certain dry state would prove very fragile, breaking without warning or provocation. Persistance proved valuable especially because it was appropriate for colour qualities sought in the final product. By this stage in the course, confidence drove construction techniques and the pace of creating increased, allowing very little strain on the piece before it was able to be supported and let to dry completely.

A variety of textures were easily obtainable. The clay responded well to all tools.

CONSTRUCTION

Initially the basic components were to be obtained from plaster moulds and/or wheel thrown forms. This was unsuccessful due to the clay having to dry too much in the moulds. The wheel thrown components were successful and used in conjunction with clay slabs. The slabs were pre-shaped in a hammock-like sling. This method allowed long slabs of clay (rolled out using the slab roller) on a length of cloth which had string lengths knotted at each corner and were secured to hooks on a frame. **(See figure 1.)**

FIG.1

The clay was let to dry to a hardness that held the form, yet wet enough to shape, cut and reconstruct with.

The boat-like forms could be altered and manipulated prior to drying by varying the lengths of one or two of the strings and varying the distances between the hooks. **(See figure 2 and 3)**

FIG.2

FIG.3

After the slabs were released from the slings they were cut into various irregular lengths and shapes. The parts were reconstructed. Joins were reinforced with coils. **(See figure 4 and 5)**

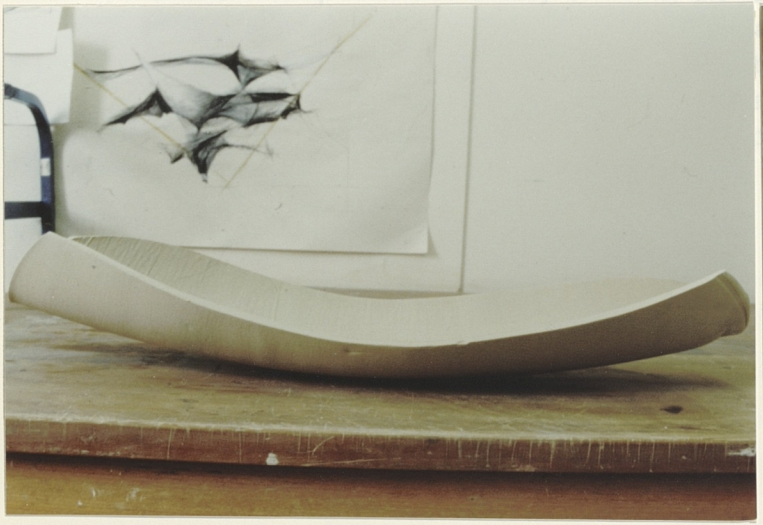


FIG.4

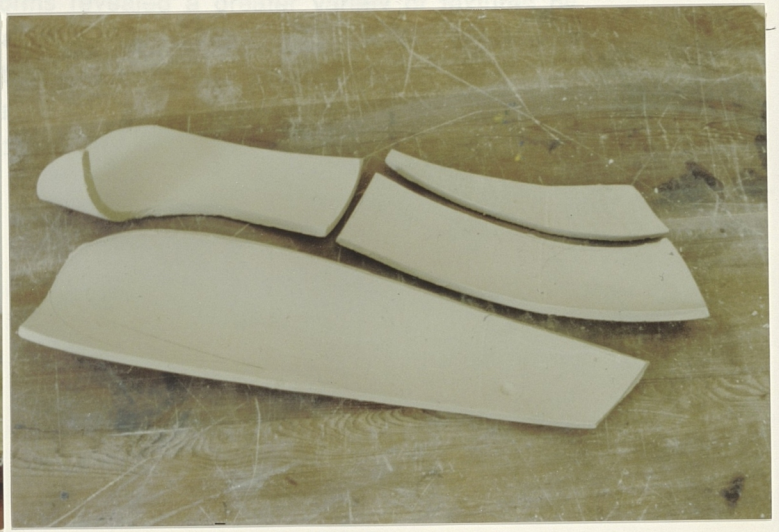


FIG.5

SURFACE TEXTURE

The first forms constructed, maintained a uniform texture, achieved with a steel rib tool. It created a sandpaper-like surface with little variation from one end of the form to the other. The main concern at this stage was to achieve clean round shapes.

Towards the completion of the body of works, the forms revealed a greater variety of textures by utilising more tools and faster working methods. There was less concern for unifying the surface. In fact, the surface enjoyed an interplay of contrasts; from the coarsest sandpaper to faint fabric impressions; from pinched, ripped edges to the sharpened and smoothed. Incisions by wood, metal and fingernails became instrumental in revealing the working processes. The surface finally imbued the forms with the energy they needed.

GLAZE

The function of glaze on the forms was to render volumes and emphasize graphic and other textural detail. Dry glazes seemed the most suited to achieve such effects.

Application of the glazes varied from thin layers where colours were most intense, to thicker coats giving very subtle tones. The pieces went through one to three firings where a combination of glazes would be built up to achieve the desired effects.

The FBR forms were spray glazed and gas fired in a light reduction atmosphere to about 1100 celsius.

The KWE forms were glazed using a sponge and fired in oxidation in electric kilns from 1120 celsius to 1150 celsius.

From a range of twenty one glazes tested twelve were selected.

MUSHROOM PINK

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	20
Cresta BB	20
Zinc Oxide	10
Nickel Oxide	1.5

SOFT GREY/MAUVE

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	20
Cresta BB	20
Nickel Oxide	1.5

SANDY/TAN

Barium Carbonate	30
Borax	20
Cresta BB	20
Vanadium Pentoxide	10
Copper Carbonate	05

PINK/MAUVE

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	20
Cresta BB	15
Zinc Oxide	10
Manganese Dioxide	1.5

SOFT GREY/BROWN

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	20
Cresta BB	20
Vanadium Pentoxide	04

PINKY/PURPLE

Barium Carbonate	100
Nepheline Syenite	20
Cresta BB	15
Zinc Oxide	10
Nickel Oxide	01

METALLIC CHARCOAL BLUE

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	30
Eckalite I	15
Silica	15
Black Copper Oxide	06
Vanadium Pentoxide	10

SOFT GREEN/BROWN SPECKLED

Barium Carbonate	50
Cresta BB	50
Vanadium Pentoxide	05
Fit 3110	20

BLUE-GREEN

Barium Carbonate	50
Cresta BB	50
Alumina Hydrate	06

PINKY/BEIGE

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	30
Eckalite I	20
Vanadium Pentoxide	07
Nickel Oxide	02

VAN GLAZE

Barium Carbonate	50
Nepheline Syenite	30
Eckalite I	20
Vanadium Pentoxide	10

SOFT AQUA

Barium Carbonate	50
Cresta BB	50
Frit 3110	20

SLIDES

SLIDE DOCUMENTATION

In the measurement height is given first, length then width.

Slide Number 1. ***Spine***
Buff Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Reduction fired.
15.5 x 134 x 18cm.

Slide Number 2. ***Orifice***
Buff Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Reduction fired.
19.5 x 76.5 x 13cm.

Slide Number 3. ***Curvature I***
Buff Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Reduction fired.
12 x 78 x 15cm.

Slide Number 4. ***Curvature II***
Buff Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Reduction fired.
15.5 x 84 x 15cm.

Slide Number 5. ***Intersection***
Buff Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Reduction fired.
37.5 x 95 x 29.5cm

Slide Number 6. ***Cavity***
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Oxidation fired.
17 x 89.5 x 10.5cm.

Slide Number 7. ***Skeletal Study I***
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. Oxidation fired.
41.5 x 56.5 x 16cm.

Slide Number 8. ***Skeletal Study II.*** Wall piece.
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 2 Oxidation firings.
21.5 x 63.5 x 17cm.

Slide Number 9. ***Skeletal Study III.*** Wall piece.
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 2 Oxidation firings.
18 x 85 x 10.5cm.

Slide Number 10. ***Skeletal Study IV*** Wall piece.
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 3 Oxidation firings.
15 x 97 x 13cm.

Slide Number 11. ***Skeletal Study V.***
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 3 Oxidation firings.
18.5 x 91 x 13.5cm.

Slide Number 12. ***Skeletal Study VI.***
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 2 Oxidation firings.
32.5 x 60.5 x 12cm.

Slide Number 13. ***Skeletal Study VII.***
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 1 Oxidation firing.
25 x 71.5 x 18cm.

Slide Number 14. ***Skeletal Study VIII.***
White Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 2 Oxidation firings.
60 x 31 x 16cm.

Slide Number 15. ***Skeletal Study IX.***
Buff Raku Clay. Dry glazed. 1 Reduction firing.
81 x 39.5 x 60.5cm.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

1991 Candidate for Graduate Diploma of Art
Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts, ANU

1987-90 Bachelor of Arts (Visual)
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Group Exhibitions

1990 Walkers Ceramic Award
Westpac Gallery, Melbourne

Graduate Exhibition, Canberra School of Art Gallery.

Tamworth Craft Show
Group exhibition, 3rd and 4th Year Students, Canberra School of Art.

1989 Spittin' Chips,]
Group exhibition, Conservation Council of the South-East Region and Canberra (Inc).

Publications

College and Students Statements, Pottery in Australia
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FOOTNOTES

1. GEIST, SIDNEY, BRANCUSI : THE SCULPTURE AND DRAWINGS - 1975, P 27.

2. IBID. P 29.

3. IBID. P 30.

4. MARTIN, MARIANNE W, FUTURIST ART AND THEORY 1909-1915 - 1978, P 165.

5. IBID. P 165-166.

6. CARO, ANTHONY, TABLE SCULPTURES 1966-77 - 1977 P 11.

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